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The Reform of the House of Lords

By Sidney Webb.

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THE REFORM OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS.

At present the House of Lords is, constitutionally, in a position of suspense. By the Parliament Act of 1911 its right of absolute veto of the people's will, expressed in a Bill passed by the House of Commons, has been destroyed. But the entirely unrepresentative and accidentally selected assembly of 600 odd Peers of Parliament remains unreformed. It still possesses great powers of obstruction and delay. Its influence in emasculating all progressive measures with which its members disagree is still very great, and is all the more objectionable in that it is largely exercised through the Cabinet in secret, without the check of public opinion. Moreover, various party leaders, and the House of Commons as a whole, are more or less pledged, if only by the preamble to the Parliament Act, to an early reform of the Second Chamber. The question cannot, therefore, be ignored. The Committee of Peers and members of the House of Commons, which, in the autumn of 1917, has taken in hand the reconstruction of the Second Chamber, is strangely constituted. Lord Bryce, who patriotically consented to be chairman—after the Speaker, Mr. Asquith, and Lord Lansdowne has successively found it impossible to undertake the task—met with great difficulties in getting his Committee together. It has no constitutional or other authority. It is very far from being a convincing or even an impressive assembly. The genuine Liberals are far outnumbered by their opponents, and the unrepresentative complexion of the list is emphasised by there being only a single representative of the Labour Party. The Committee, which is as "unconstitutional" as was the Speaker's Conference which suggested it, can claim even less support from public opinion. It can justify its existence only in one way: by discovering a solution commanding general assent.

It may be doubted whether the reconstruction of the Second Chamber has yet been sufficiently considered by public opinion, for any plan to which representative members of the House of

Lords are likely to agree to gain sufficient public support to enable it to be carried into law. But the present position of the House of Lords is too anomalous to permit of the question being indefinitely shelved; and the appointment of Lord Bryce's Committee has at any rate set the ball rolling. The reconstruction of the Second Chamber will be one of the issues on which candidates at each successive General Election must be required to declare themselves. The subject is, therefore, one on which not only members of Parliament, but also ordinary citizens, and particularly the Labour Party, must make up their minds.

Do we need, in the United Kingdom, any Second Chamber at all; and, if we do, what exactly do we need it for? Clear thinking about these questions is at present hindered by three subconscious prepossessions, one of them inspired by a haunting sense of history, another by indistinct visions of political geography, and the third by a vague fear of Democracy, basing itself on a bygone political science.

WHAT IS THE HOUSE OF LORDS?

The House of Lords, so far as history and the forms of the British Constitution are concerned, is not a Second Chamber at all. It is one of the few survivals in Europe of the once common separate Estates of the Realm. Of such "Estates" there used to be, in some countries, not two only, but three, four, or even five—the Nobles, the Clergy, the Municipalities, the Peasants, and the tenants on the Royal Demesne being entitled to be separately summoned to give the opinion of their respective orders upon the King's business. What happened was that, in the course of centuries, in this as in other countries, the majority of the separate orders were merged in a single assembly of "the Commons," which ceased to be an Estate of the Realm, and came to stand, in fact, though not always in form, for the whole community. Where any ancient Estate continued to sit separately, as in this country the Peers and Bishops did in the House of Lords, they did so (if we are to regard the substance of the Constitution), not as distinct Estates of the Realm, but—so far, at any rate, as the nineteenth century was concerned—as a Second Chamber. Since 1832, at least, the House of Lords has not been regarded by constitutional writers as having, *in fact*, whatever it may have had in form, any other functions than those of a Second Chamber; and it was in respect of its satisfactory exercise of those functions that the House of Lords was, by its friends, alleged to find its justification. The political crime or blunder committed by the Conservative majority of the House of Lords in 1909-10, when it rejected the Budget Bill passed by the House of Commons, lay in the explicit revival of the claim of the Peers and Bishops to act, not as a Second Chamber, but as a separate Estate of the Realm. The House of Lords did not oppose the Budget Bill in the form in which it was presented on the ground that it was so badly drafted as to fail in many of its clauses to express the

opinion of the Legislature, and that it therefore needed drastic revision—though this, as we now see, was abundantly true. Nor did the House of Lords seriously allege that the House of Commons, in passing such a Budget, was not acting with the acquiescence and support of a majority of the electorate—a point on which the Peers and Bishops might have been honestly mistaken. What made the action of the overwhelming majority of the House of Lords equivalent to its political suicide was the suddenly revived claim of their Lordships to act, not as a Second Chamber, but as a separate Estate of the Realm, by setting up, as against the will of the nation expressed by the House of Commons, their own personal opinions that the Budget was, in substance, a bad one; and by acting on those opinions so far as to assert their right to nullify, whenever they chose, the decisions made by the House of Commons, in which the voice of the whole community had come to be sought. The result was decisive. We may take it as definitely settled that, whatever else they may desire, the people of this country will not tolerate the revival of any separate “Estate” of persons or classes who are to be privileged to enforce, against the opinions of the majority of the nation, any views of their own order. Any reconstructed House of Lords must accordingly be quite definitely made only a Second Chamber, with the functions and powers appropriate to such an organ of the National Legislature, and no others.

DO WE WANT AN IMPERIAL SENATE ?

The question is, however, confused in the minds of some people by an indistinct impression of the Senate of the United States, and to a lesser degree of the Federal Council representing the Cantons of Switzerland, one or other of which has lately formed a model for other federal communities, notably Australia and South Africa. It is sometimes suggested that the reconstructed House of Lords should take the form of an “Imperial Senate,” in which representatives of the various parts of the British Empire, including the United Kingdom, should sit as an Imperial Legislature, incidentally serving as a revising Chamber to all the subordinate Legislatures, including the House of Commons itself. This, to put it bluntly, is a dream, and a bad dream. The British Empire is not, and cannot now be made, a federal Empire with subordinate Legislatures. It is an Alliance of Free States, with a congeries of other dependencies, themselves progressing towards various forms of legislative autonomy. The self-governing Dominions have not the slightest intention of placing themselves, even for what are called “Imperial affairs,” under a Senate in which they must for many generations form a minority. Neither Canada nor Australia, neither New Zealand nor South Africa, would for a moment consent to make their own Legislatures subordinate to an Imperial Senate formed out of a British Second Chamber. Nor has British Democracy any desire

to allow the British "Junkers" to call in Canadian and South African plutocracy to their aid. Constitution-making for the "Britannic Alliance" must take another form. Any representative "Council of the Empire" will, for as far ahead as can be foreseen, exercise powers of consultation and suggestion only, not of command or legislation. And any such "Imperial" organ would be quite unfit to serve as a Second Chamber for the British or any other constituent Legislature. These "federal" Senates, whether in Australia or South Africa, Canada or the United States, Switzerland or the German Empire, have nothing to do with our problem of a Second Chamber. We must accordingly dismiss the idea of any colonial representation, or the separate representation of Scotland, Ireland or Wales, in the proposed Second Chamber for the United Kingdom.

"THE HOUSE OF PROPERTY OWNERS."

The third source of confused thinking is the vague fear of Democracy, leading to the desire for some counterpoise to an all-powerful single Chamber. This prepossession, found to greater or less extent in nearly all property owners, is scarcely amenable to argument. It is plainly founded, to a large extent, on an illusion. The apprehended attacks on property must come in the main in the form of taxation in the annual or other money Bill; and it is just these money Bills that no Second Chamber, however constituted—not even the present House of Lords—can ever be allowed to touch. This was finally settled by the Parliament Act of 1911, from which there will certainly be no going back. Thus no Second Chamber can possibly save the property owner from taxation, however drastic. Moreover, property owners, like peers, cannot nowadays claim any position of privilege against the will of the Nation. Any real danger of unjust treatment can be met by the powers of revision and delay which constitute the proper function of a Second Chamber. What is abundantly clear is that, if it is really sought to create a rival power to the House of Commons, the intention must be carefully concealed from the Labour Party and the electorate, under pain of getting the whole scheme summarily rejected! It is too late to "go back on Democracy": and apprehensive property owners would be well advised to place their trust in "the people," contenting themselves with ensuring that any serious innovation shall obtain a considered judgment, and not merely an impulsive decision, from the electorate.

WHAT KIND OF SECOND CHAMBER DO WE NEED?

We come now to the question of what the nation really needs in place of the House of Lords. One thing is plain. We do not require, and public opinion will not tolerate, any rival to the House

of Commons. Where it agrees with the popular Legislature such a rival is useless; where it disagrees, it is in the highest degree dangerous. This consideration quite negatives the project of an elected Second Chamber, which Mr. Asquith's Cabinet was contemplating before the war, but against which the House of Commons very decisively expressed itself before even the draft was published. The long and calamitous experience of an entirely elected Second Chamber in Victoria is conclusive against its imitation in any other unitary State. It is not the function of the Second Chamber in a unitary State to represent the people; this must be done, as well as it can be done, by the House of Commons. Whatever may be the imperfections of the House of Commons in this respect, they are not mended by setting up another Chamber claiming to be representative. This would be to get back to the mediæval system of rival and competing Estates of the Realm. We are free from the needs of a federal State which have compelled the United States and the Australian Commonwealth to incur the inconvenience and peril of such a legislative dualism. Similar considerations negative equally the fantastic project of a functional or stratified Second Chamber, elected by the whole electorate voting by trades, professions or occupations. All the arguments adduced for this by its advocates are valid—in so far as they have any validity at all—for the election of the House of Commons, that is to say, the Legislature itself; they have no relevance for a body which is not to be a Legislature but merely a Second Chamber.

THE PROPER FUNCTIONS OF A SECOND CHAMBER.

The essential function of a Second Chamber, it may be suggested, and the only one for which such a body is required or can be permanently useful, is that of revision in its largest sense. The Legislature proper may often be passing Bills which ought not to pass into law in the form in which they leave the popular assembly. There will be, in the first place, errors of drafting, and palpable mistakes and omissions. In the second place, there will not infrequently be a lack of consistency, either of legislation or of policy, in relation to other matters which the whole community would wish to see righted. Finally, there is on some measures the contingency of doubt as to whether the decision of the House of Commons would be upheld by public opinion. The House of Commons does not always represent the people. It may be under the dominion of an imperious temporary majority, itself controlled by a "party caucus," and dominated by a particular interest. The particular measure may have been finally carried only by one vote. It may enact an indefinite prolongation of the life of the Legislature. It may have been carried by a moribund House. It may have been rushed through all its stages in a few days, in a wild panic, or conceivably

even by an anti-popular conspiracy, without public opinion becoming aware of what is happening. It may be of a nature to arouse irresistible popular opposition, only that opposition does not instantly manifest itself. British Democracy may well be in full agreement with the most apprehensive of property owners in not desiring to erect even its elected House of Commons into a position of supreme dictatorship. The case for a Second Chamber, *confined to the proper functions of a Second Chamber*, is as convincing to the Democrat as it is to the most timid of Conservatives, provided *only that it is not made an excuse for setting up some power by which any particular class or any particular political party can defeat the people's will.*

WHAT A SECOND CHAMBER OUGHT TO BE.

What is required for a Second Chamber is a position of independence of the Popular Assembly, well-defined functions of its own which it cannot extend, and sufficient power temporarily to "hold up" the Popular Assembly, without temptation or opportunity to compete with it. The Second Chamber needs to be composed of persons of ripe wisdom and judgment, not necessarily orators or popular electioneers; known to and respected by the public for their personal qualities, but not necessarily the most widely known of notorieties; not representative of any one class or interest, not even of age or of property in general; and widely inclusive of legal and administrative training and experience. It must not be merely an "Order of Merit," an assembly of old men; least of all a sanctuary of the superannuated, a gathering of "Ex's," or persons who have retired from office as Cabinet Ministers, Judges or Colonial Governors. Popular election does not produce such an assembly as is required. Appointment by the King (that is, by the Prime Minister for the time being) has proved a failure in Canada and New Zealand, and is, from its inevitable partisan character, obviously unsuitable; there is no case for selection from the peerage any more than from the barage; moreover, its members must not oppress us for life, but must be continually being renewed, so as to keep the Second Chamber always in touch with the opinions of the current generation.

It has sometimes been incautiously suggested that the only acceptable Second Chamber in a free State would be one formed by popular election. This requires further examination.

NO "LOADING OF THE DICE" AGAINST DEMOCRACY.

In the first place, it is not at all likely that the present House of Lords will sanction, or that the present Cabinet will propose, a Second Chamber chosen entirely by the popular electorate. There will certainly be claims that some, at least, of the present Peers

should sit as of right, or at any rate (like the existing Scottish and Irish Representative Peers) by the suffrage of their brother Peers. There will be attempts made to secure permanent seats for the holders of certain great offices, such as the Royal Princes, the Archbishops and Bishops of the Church of England, perhaps the leaders of Nonconformity, the heads of the so-called "learned professions," and, comically enough, the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor of the City of London! All these must be decisively negatived by the Labour Party. Whatever their pretext, they really represent underhand attempts to "pack" the Second Chamber with members who, whatever may be their other qualities, do not share either the feelings or the desires of the great mass of the population.

Any permanent reservation of seats in the Second Chamber, either for Peers or Ecclesiastics, the scions of Royalty or great Officers of State, the representatives of particular localities or of particular classes, means a "loading of the dice" against Democracy, which Labour (even if tempted by the offer of a few seats for distinguished Labour Leaders!) must absolutely reject.

NO "FAKED" ELECTION!

More plausible are the proposals that will be put forward—when it is found that public opinion will not tolerate a "faked" Second Chamber, which would (from the standpoint of Democracy) amount only to the resuscitation of a House of Lords under another name—for a Second Chamber "more or less" elected by the people. It may be proposed to form the Second Chamber, wholly or in part, of the Chairmen or other representatives chosen by the County Councils or the principal Municipal Corporations. We may find the Chambers of Commerce or the new Federation of British Industry asked to appoint representatives, the doctors and the lawyers, and even, to impart an appearance of fairness—really throwing a bone to the dog!—the Trades Union Congress graciously allowed to nominate one or two members among the whole crowd of so-called "superior people."

All these projects of indirect election are born of the distrust of Democracy; they are devised with the deliberate intention of hindering the House of Commons from carrying out the people's will. However ingeniously these systems are formulated, so as to hide their main purpose, they always reveal themselves as calculated to produce a Second Chamber made up, almost entirely, of members of one or other of the old political parties; of representatives of the landlord or capitalist class; of employers and "business men"; of more or less wealthy property-owners. The one section that is always deliberately excluded, or else admitted only as a quite infinitesimal minority, are the four-fifths of the whole population who are manual working wage-earners. A

Second Chamber thus constituted—professedly by popular election!—would certainly contain, at most, only a handful of men of the wage-earning class. There would probably not even be any Payment of Members. Such a Second Chamber would suit the Conservative Party down to the ground. It might be nearly as useful to the Liberal Party. The Labour Party, even if it came to form a majority in the House of Commons, would find itself, with such a Second Chamber, in the same hopeless minority as is the present Liberal Party in the House of Lords. If that position is intolerable to the members of the Liberal Party, with what “face” can they propose to subject the Labour Party to the same impotence? Moreover, from such a Second Chamber one whole sex would find itself either wholly excluded, or at best only represented by a small handful of carefully picked women. Any indirectly elected Second Chamber could not fail to be predominantly an Assembly of the wealthy middle-class, permanently biased against really effective economic and industrial reforms.

NO ELECTED SECOND CHAMBER!

Matters are not much mended if (as Mr. Asquith and Mr. Runciman, Lord Crewe and Mr. McKenna are believed to have been ready to propose in 1913) the Second Chamber is formed entirely by direct election. Apart from merely federal bodies (like the Senates of the United States and the Australian Commonwealth), such Second Chambers as exist of this kind in unitary States (as in Victoria) have worked very badly. There is nearly always a higher franchise or a higher qualification, whether by property or age, than for the Popular Assembly. Or the same end is secured by making the Second Chamber much smaller than the Popular Assembly, and therefore elected by gigantic constituencies which, in this country, with large populations, could be adequately contested only at great expense, and with the aid of the most widely circulating newspapers which are all controlled by wealthy men. Thus, with our prospective electorate of 16 millions—certainly to be increased presently to at least 20 millions—a popularly elected Second Chamber of 100 members would mean single-member constituencies each averaging half a million population, with electorates each averaging from 150,000 to 200,000 men and women to be circularised and addressed! Complicated systems of Proportional Representation (with grouped constituencies of a million or two electors!) would further increase the necessity—if a majority of the Assembly is to be secured, and not merely the return of an isolated representative of exceptional views—for expensive party organisation. One way or another it is always contrived, in all the plans that are suggested, that the elected Second Chamber shall be predominantly a “House of Wealth.” This purpose is openly avowed. It is declared that, if numbers are to rule the Popular Assembly, “property” must be represented—even out of all proportion to the numbers of property owners—

in the Second Chamber. Against any such contention every earnest Liberal or Radical, every member of the Labour Party—indeed, every real Democrat—must enter an emphatic protest.

What does not seem commonly realised is that even the best possible elected Second Chamber necessarily and inevitably makes a bad Second Chamber—that is to say, a body so constituted as to perform very badly the essential duties of a Second Chamber. A popularly elected Second Chamber is, in this country, certain to be elected on “party issues,” and to be organised on “party lines.” The very intention with which such a Second Chamber is created is that it shall frequently, if not invariably, be made up, so far as its majority is concerned, so as to be in opposition to the Popular Assembly. Otherwise there would, in the opinion of those who advocate such a plan, be no profit in it! Whenever the majority of the Second Chamber is of another political party than that to which the Government of the day belongs, the temptation to the party leaders, the party organisers, the party newspapers and the party caucus to discredit the Government measures, to delay and obstruct their becoming law and even to throw them over for a General Election will be irresistible. Needless to say this political partiality would tend always to be exercised to the detriment of innovations; and therefore to the disadvantage of all but the Conservative, or “stand pat” Party. Once more the dice would be loaded, more skilfully than ever, against Democracy.

But there is another reason, of quite a different character, against an elected Second Chamber—a reason which is all the stronger when the proposal is to make the Second Chamber entirely elective, on a franchise as wide as that for the Popular Assembly, and with qualifications and other conditions no more restrictive. Such a Second Chamber—whether chosen by geographical constituencies or by industries or other classes—without being well qualified for the duty of revision of the measures sent up to it, could claim to be as truly representative of the People’s Will as the Popular Assembly itself. *This is a fatal defect in a Second Chamber.* To set up a second exponent of the People’s Will, in opposition or rivalry to the first, would inevitably be to create opposition, conflict and deadlock. What would be the use of such an Elected Second Chamber if it always agreed with the other House? How could differences of opinion between them on minor points, or unpopular causes, or abstruse issues, ever be decided? How could the quarrels between them be decided, even on great issues, without evil wrangling and long delay, and possibly the drastic remedy of a Double Dissolution, whenever there was a failure to agree? It is of the greatest importance to take care that the Second Chamber should be so constituted as to have no claim to be an exponent of the People’s Will, any more than to be a medium for the expression of the will of particular Estates of the Realm or particular social classes. What the nation wants a Second Chamber for is not to pretend to the expression of anybody’s will—that is the business of the Popular Assembly—but

for the quite distinct function of acting as a criticising and revising body, coming to the help of the Popular Assembly in order to ensure a correct expression of the People's Will. We want to get an organ of criticism and revision that will not be swayed by party passion or party bias to oppose the measures sent up to it, merely because it does not like their contents; and yet will maintain a position of independence of the Popular Assembly sufficient to enable it temporarily to "hold up" that Assembly whenever it fails to express the People's Will.

THE RIGHT SOLUTION.

Surveying all the experience of the world with Second Chambers—municipal as well as legislative, unitary and federal—it may be suggested that the best expedient, and one which has, in fact, worked with singular smoothness and success, is that adopted by Norway, namely, election of the Second Chamber by the Popular Assembly. We suggest that the best plan of reconstructing the House of Lords as a Second Chamber for the United Kingdom is to enact that, immediately after each General Election, the House of Commons should elect, by the best system of Proportional Representation, a Second Chamber of, say, one hundred members, chosen from among persons (male or female) who are not members of the House of Commons. They should be irremovable during their tenure of office; should be made members of the Privy Council (and thus be styled Right Honourable); and should receive the same payment as Members of Parliament. Such a Second Chamber should be empowered to confer privately by committees with the House of Commons about the details of Bills, and to refer back to the House of Commons for reconsideration (but only if accompanied by a critical and detailed report expounding the revision suggested, and the reasons therefor) any Bill (not being the Annual other Money Bill as now defined) in which, whether or not its objects and purposes commended themselves, it was thought that specific amendments were required, in order either to make the measure more accurately express what the House of Commons desired, or to remedy what seemed to be omissions or inconsistencies within the measure itself, or to bring it into harmony with existing legislation in other departments. Moreover, the Second Chamber should be empowered, irrespective of its own views upon the propriety of the Bill, whenever it considered that a measure was of such a nature, or had been passed by the House of Commons under such circumstances, as to demand further consideration by the public opinion of the nation, either to refer the Bill back to the House of Commons for reconsideration in a subsequent session, explaining the reasons making such delay expedient, or (except in the case of the Annual Money Bill, or other legislation not brooking delay), in an extreme case, to suspend it for reconsideration by the House of Commons for a

period not exceeding two years, or until the first session after the next ensuing General Election. No reference back of either sort should be permitted more than once for the same measure.

It is suggested that a Second Chamber of this sort, with powers strictly defined in the above sense, would exercise satisfactorily all the functions that are proper to a Second Chamber, and it could not practically usurp any others. It would be as free as is possible from the temptation—the greatest to which a Second Chamber is exposed—to act from party spirit in a direction contrary to that of the majority of the House of Commons. It would be always in touch with every section of the House of Commons, and would yet be entirely independent of it. It would have at its command all the talent needed for revision in the largest sense, and none of the corporate ambition that might tempt its members to rivalry of what must, in any case, be and remain the supreme Legislature.

THE CUNNING AMENDMENT THAT WILL RUIN IT!

It is essential to the proper working of such a Second Chamber (in order to obviate the deflecting influence of party bias or party passion) that it should at all times correspond exactly, in the distribution of its members among parties, with the Popular Assembly for the time being. The cunning way to vitiate the proposal—an amendment certain to be proposed in the interests of the Conservative party and the property owners—is to make the term of office of such a Second Chamber longer than that of the House of Commons by which it is chosen; for instance, to say that its members should serve for the duration of two Parliaments, one half retiring at each dissolution. Such an amendment, specious as it is, must be strenuously resisted. However suitable it might be for a popularly elected Second Chamber, in which it was sought to secure an expression of the nation's permanent will, rather than of what might be only a momentary wave of feeling, it is quite out of place with regard to a Second Chamber which has not got to express the nation's will at all, but only to act as a Court of Revision. The cunning of the amendment lies in the fact that it would set up a bulwark against each successive House of Commons in which a relatively "progressive" majority had been returned. This would find itself balked by the over-standing half of the Second Chamber representing the defeated party majority of the last previous House of Commons. The discredited Conservative or property-owners' majority, against which the nation had risen in revolt, and indignantly it hurled from office and power, would be enabled always to lay its dead hand on the measures that the nation had voted for! It is accordingly of vital importance that the Second Chamber should be wholly appointed by each newly elected House of Commons for a

term of office expiring at each dissolution. Nothing short of this ought to be agreed to by any member of the Labour Party or by any genuine democrat.

CONCLUSIONS.

Thus we come definitely to the following conclusions:—

The House of Lords must go.

The House of Commons must be and remain the Supreme Legislature.

There is good ground for the establishment of a Second Chamber.

But only if this is not made an excuse for enabling particular sections to defeat the People's Will.

An Imperial Senate is impossible, and would anyhow not form a suitable Second Chamber.

The nation will not stand a "House of Property Owners," or any revival of separate Estates of the Realm.

There must be no "faked" Second Chamber loading the dice against Democracy.

Nor do we want a sanctuary for the superannuated, an Assembly of Ex's, a Gilded Sepulchre for the Meritorious Aged.

Any "partially elected" Second Chamber would inevitably turn out to be packed with peers and dignitaries, millionaires and superannuated officials, in which the Conservative Party would have a permanent majority, and in which the Labour Party would find itself as hopelessly out-voted as is the Liberal Party in the House of Lords.

We must beware equally of any Second Chamber formed by indirect election, or nominated by County Councils, the learned professions and great interests—all of them devices for loading the dice against Democracy!

Beware, too, of the bribe to Trade Union leaders—even as many as six of them may be offered seats in a Second Chamber of rich men—how generous!

But the Second Chamber may be quite as deadly to Democracy if it is wholly elected by the people, as Victoria has found to its cost: it is easy, whether by a special franchise or by requiring high qualifications, or even merely by making colossal constituencies, to exclude all but wealthy men or the representatives of wealthy party organisations, as successfully as in the House of Lords.

A popularly elected Second Chamber would, in fact, always be a bad Second Chamber, because it could claim to be as much the representative of the people as the House of Commons, and would inevitably become a rival to it. The function of a Second Chamber is merely to help the House of Commons to express correctly the People's Will; not to baulk it.

By far the best way of forming a Second Chamber in this country would be the Norwegian system—let the House of Commons elect, after each General Election, by Proportional Representation, say 100 men and women outside its own ranks, to remain in office only for the term of that Parliament, to be paid the same as Members of the House of Commons, and to be styled Right Honourable.

Such a Second Chamber might be entrusted with power to refer back to the House of Commons, with a detailed critical report (but once only), any Bill (other than the Annual Money Bill) which the Second Chamber thought badly drafted or inconsistent with other legislation; or any such Bill, irrespective of whether or not it commended itself in substance, which seemed to require further consideration by public opinion.

But beware of the cunning amendment by which the Tory party, or the property-owners, will certainly seek to pervert even this proposal into a bulwark of the existing order. To enable the dead hand of the past to baulk the people's will it is only necessary to make the term of office of the Second Chamber longer than that of the House of Commons that nominates it. Any such cunning dodge to make the Second Chamber differ in party balance from the House of Commons for the time being must be strenuously resisted.

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